



HELPFILE

PUT YOUR QUESTIONS TO OUR TECHNICAL EXPERTS

Contents

HELPFILE

Paul Mullen answers your computing queries

What's wrong with my keyboard?	244
Internet Explorer terminates unusually	245
USB keyboard and mouse won't work in DOS	245
Feedback: Backup before you use RegEdit	245
Windows keeps detecting new printer	246
Folders always open with search option	246
Accessing Compaq BIOS settings	246
Random PC startup	247
How do I play games on my notebook?	247
Dual-layer DVD confusion	247
Factfile: Data Execution Prevention problems	248
Renaming a group of files	248
Floating point error prevents downloads	249
My processor gets very hot	249
Reinstalling Windows Me	249

IVAN IWANNADO 251

Ivan does his Christmas shopping online

NIGEL KNOWITALL 252

Linking troublesome video files • Feedback: Outlook email • Going round in circles in PowerPoint • Feedback: Excel hide and seek • Confusing Outlook Express message • Sorting a model list

BUYING CLINIC 254

I need a laptop for bebop • What's wrong with beige? • Can I fix my iPod? • Can I use SATA II too? • Which TV should I buy?

CONTACTING HELPFILE

EMAIL PAUL MULLEN AT:
helpfile@computershopper.co.uk

WRITE TO:

Helpfile,
Computer Shopper,
30 Cleveland Street,
London W1T 4JD

When writing to Helpfile, please try to give full details of your problem. We also require both daytime and evening phone numbers in case we need more information. Although the policy of Computer Shopper is not to publish readers' email addresses, we include them in Helpfile so that other readers with experience of similar problems can share their solution (please also cc any comments to helpfile@computershopper.co.uk). If you would prefer not to have your email address published, please say so.

PAUL MULLEN

Paul has been a transport demand forecaster, economic adviser to the government and IT consultant to many big companies, and has been using and writing software for personal computers since 1978

helpfile@computershopper.co.uk

KEYBOARD REGIONAL SETTINGS

WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY KEYBOARD?



I recently finished building my own computer and for the most part it works well – except, that is, for certain keyboard functions. When I try to type @ I get " and vice versa, and the pound sign when pressed gives #. The # key gives \. The operating system is Windows XP Home Edition and the software supplied with the keyboard is Microsoft IntelliType Pro 2.2. This has been replaced by Microsoft IntelliType Pro 5.2, which I downloaded from the Microsoft website.

When I plug my new Microsoft keyboard into my old Packard Bell computer, without loading the Microsoft software, it works fine. When I reverse the procedure and plug my Packard Bell keyboard into my new computer, I get the same faults as before. Any ideas how I can put this right?

Brian Bennett, Brian0237@aol.com

There is nothing wrong with your keyboard. Each key on the keyboard produces a scan code that tells Windows which physical key has been pressed, such as the fourth key in the top row and so on. It is up to the Windows keyboard driver to decide which character that key represents.

However, your installation of Windows XP seems to think you are using an American keyboard. This may be because you are using an American version of Windows XP, or perhaps the Microsoft keyboard came with the American version of the software, which might have confused Windows.

Go to Control Panel and choose the Regional and Language Options. On the Regional Options tab, make sure English (United Kingdom) is selected and not English (US). Next, click on the Languages



Make sure that the default input language is set to English (United Kingdom)

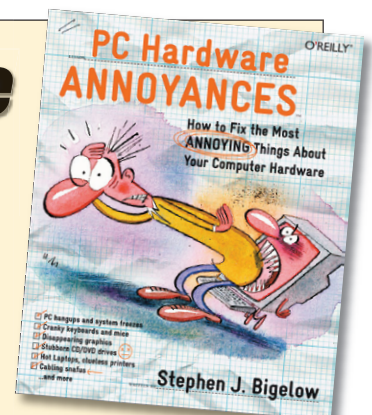
tab and Details under 'Text services and input languages'. Make sure the default input language is set to English (United Kingdom). In the lower box it lists settings for each option chosen. Under English (United Kingdom) it should show Keyboard – United Kingdom. If you don't see this option, click Add, select the input language of English (United Kingdom) and choose a keyboard layout of UK.

If you use this box to add more than one keyboard layout, you will see a little language indicator appear at the right-hand side of the Taskbar. This shows the first two letters of the keyboard layout selected, which is not very helpful when the choice is English (US) or English (UK), as both show as EN. All the same, you can click on this to change the keyboard layout. This is useful for anyone who has to type in a foreign language with accents. Instead of the standard UK keyboard, you can switch to the UK Extended layout. More details are available at www.microsoft.com/globaldev/drintl/faqs/kbdfaq.msp.



PC Hardware Annoyances

If you send our star letter, you'll receive a prize. This month's winner gets a copy of O'Reilly's *PC Hardware Annoyances*, which will help you fix any number of hardware problems. If you don't want to spend the rest of your life troubleshooting, make sure you keep this next to your PC along with the latest copy of *Computer Shopper*. Your PC woes will disappear.





INTERNET BROWSER EXTENSIONS

INTERNET EXPLORER TERMINATES UNUSUALLY

Q Internet Explorer will not work; all I get is the following message: "Microsoft Visual C++ Runtime Library Runtime Error Program C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplore.exe. This application has requested the Runtime to terminate in an unusual way. Please contact the application's support team for more information." How do I contact the support team? We pensioners struggle to do simple things, and this is beyond me. I made Tiscali my default browser, as I have recently been able to get broadband in our little village. Will I have to uninstall Internet Explorer and download it again? I use Windows XP, which automatically upgrades itself, so I can't replace

it by downloading the latest version because I have already got it.

Ian Grant, ian-marg_grant@tiscali.co.uk

A That error message is not too helpful. It is usually caused by the installation of incompatible software. Whoever wrote it assumed you'd know which application you had just installed. This problem is almost certainly caused by spyware, which is software that installs itself on your computer without your knowledge. It is usually careful to conceal its author's identity.

For a quick fix, open Control Panel and click on the Internet Options icon. If you have simple menus enabled, this will be under the Networks option. Then click the Advanced tab and scroll down the

Browsing settings until you find one called Enable Third-Party Browser Extensions. Remove the tick to disable this. Then close the window and restart.

Hopefully this will cure the problem, but it is just a workaround. To solve the problem properly, you need a good anti-spyware program. We suggest you try the free beta version of Microsoft AntiSpyware from www.microsoft.com/security.

Once you have removed the spyware you should be able to turn extensions back on. If you still have a problem, bear in mind that other add-ons, such as the Google Toolbar, can occasionally cause this error. Turning off extensions should help. If you installed the Google Toolbar, try removing it and see if this cures the problem, then you can download and install a new copy of it.

HARDWARE USB BIOS SUPPORT

USB KEYBOARD AND MOUSE WON'T WORK IN DOS

Q After setting up my new Logitech LX 501 wireless keyboard and mouse I opened Partition Magic in DOS, only to find that neither keyboard nor mouse worked. My MSI KT4V motherboard is only two years old, but does not seem to have a relevant BIOS menu item I can adjust. Is there a way to enable this facility?

Bill Donohoe, bdonohoe@waitrose.com

A When a computer boots up, before it has loaded an operating system, the only devices it can access are those supported by the motherboard's built-in basic input-output system (BIOS). When USB devices first appeared on the market in 1996, they could be accessed only after Windows had loaded its USB drivers and recognised the devices. This meant it was impossible to boot from a USB drive or use a USB keyboard to enter the BIOS setup.

The BIOS creators realised that users with a USB keyboard would want to use it in the BIOS setup program, so they added USB support, at least for USB ports built on to the motherboard. Add-on USB cards are likely to use different chipsets and still require drivers. Most motherboards support USB drives such as external floppy drives, USB flash drives and external hard disks as bootable devices.

You were on the right track, but have missed an option in the BIOS setup. On most recent

motherboards there is an option, buried somewhere in the screens, called 'Enable Legacy Support for USB keyboards'. The word 'legacy' in this context refers to older operating systems such as DOS, which rely on the BIOS for input and output devices. You need to find and enable this option. It may be in Advanced Options, Integrated Peripherals or even in Boot Options.

In addition to USB support, DOS-based applications require a mouse driver to be loaded before you can use a mouse. Software such as Partition Magic should include a basic mouse driver on the boot disks they create. It will usually be a small program loaded by a line in the Autoexec.bat file. This standard mouse driver should work with the cordless USB mouse, provided USB support is enabled in the BIOS, but it may not support advanced mouse functions such as a scroll-wheel. If you create your own bootable DOS disks, you must make sure you include a mouse driver.

```

USB Controller      : Enabled
USB Keyboard Support : Disabled
Onboard Serial Port 1 : 3F8/IRQ4
Onboard Serial Port 2 : 2F8/IRQ3
Onboard Parallel Port : 378/IRQ7
Parallel Port Mode   : SPP
UART2 Mode          : Standard

PS/2 Mouse Power On : Disabled
Keyboard Power On    : Disabled
  
```

Check in the BIOS for USB keyboard support

FEEDBACK REGISTRY

BACK UP BEFORE YOU USE REGEDIT

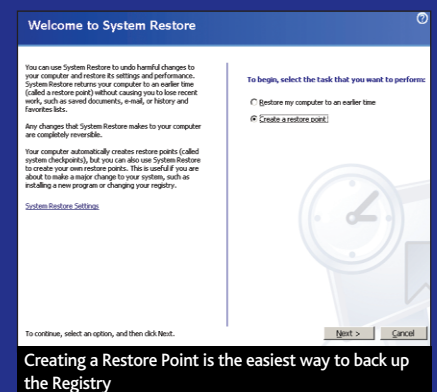
Q Having been a senior technician for an ISP for seven years, I could relate with most of your 'Presenting Britain's Dumbest Computer Users' article in the September issue of *Shopper*. But given the clueless nature of many users, I find it worrying that you frequently instruct them to edit the Registry.

While I do not dispute the accuracy of the advice, I think it would be prudent to include a disclaimer that editing the Registry can potentially render your PC unbootable if you do not follow advice precisely and make a backup prior to any edits. In my work, I was obliged to guide customers through the

Registry over the phone, and always prefaced such action with the warning that "editing the Registry is a bit like open heart surgery while the patient is awake and wondering why you're waving a scalpel in their face. But don't worry, I've been here seven years and never lost a patient yet." Oddly enough, they followed what I said with extreme care.

Julian Hall, jules@kaotic.co.uk

A We usually do say that Registry editing is for advanced users only. However, we agree with your point. Readers should always create a Restore Point or other backup of the Registry before using RegEdit.



REGISTRY PERMISSIONS

WINDOWS KEEPS DETECTING NEW PRINTER

Q I have an Epson Stylus Photo 870 inkjet printer. I installed it using the procedure recommended by Epson; I installed the software first then plugged in the printer. However, on rebooting, Windows XP detected new hardware and installed a not-quite-identical copy of the printer.

Epson told me this was a known Windows XP error and referred me to the Microsoft Knowledge Base article 298370. This suggested deleting the Registry key HKey_Local_Machine\System, CurrentControlSet, Enum, LPTENUM. When I tried to do this, I got a message telling me the key could not be deleted because of an error that took place while deleting the key.

I would guess that many computer users with Epson printers experience this problem but simply ignore the unnecessary extra printer. However, I would like to solve the problem and wondered if you have any suggestions.

Neil Richmond, n.richmond@btinternet.com

A It is quite right that the problem is with this key, which lists the printers already detected. Windows keeps on redetecting the printer because it can't add it to this key. The

author of the article assumed that this was because the key was corrupted, but if you don't have permission to delete it then it's likely you can't add to it either. This is your real problem, and it is not unique to Epson printers, either. I have a friend with a Lexmark printer that does the same thing.

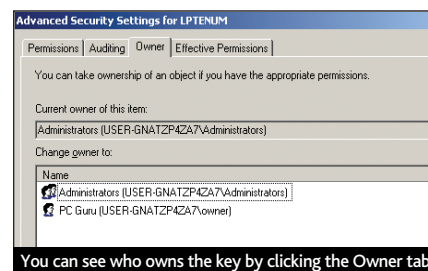
You need to be logged in as a user with Administrator rights. If you logged in as a Limited user – which is one way to protect yourself against viruses and spyware – you wouldn't be able to delete or modify the key, and any printer driver you installed would be forgotten the next time you rebooted.

Assuming you are an Administrator, you need to change the ownership of this Registry key. Start by creating a Restore Point, because as Julian Hall reminds us on page 245, editing the Registry can be dangerous. Then click on Start, Run, type in Regedit and click OK. Click on the '+' signs by the following keys: HKey_Local_Machine, System, CurrentControlSet, Enum, LPTENUM. Highlight LPTENUM and click Edit, Permissions. In the Window that opens, click the Advanced button then, in the new window, select the Owner tab. This will show the current owner, which should be the Administrators group.

If the Administrators group is not the owner, you need to take ownership or at least set permissions that allow you full control. Try changing ownership to Administrators by clicking on that group entry, ticking the 'Replace Owner on sub-containers and objects' box and clicking Apply.

If you can't delete this key you probably don't have permission to take ownership either. You'll have to go back up the chain of Registry keys to one for which you do have ownership and repeat the procedure, ticking the 'Replace Owner...' box.

Once you've done this, you probably won't need to delete the key. Just delete the Epson printer from Printers and Faxes in Control Panel and allow it to be redetected on the next reboot.



WINDOWS FOLDERS

FOLDERS OPEN WITH SEARCH OPTION

Q Whenever I double-click file folders in My Documents, Windows XP automatically opens up a new window with the search pane on the left. I realise it must be set as a default because, when I right-click the folders, the list of things that you can do comes up with options such as Explore, Print and so on, but the Search option is at the top of the list in bold. This is also happening in the hard disk folder, the CD-ROM drive folder and all the other folders.

It could be something to do with File Folder options, but when I try to change the default setting for opening a folder the Open listing isn't there.

Michael Skuse, incredigingerbreadman@gmail.com

A As you probably know, you have been messing around with the Folder Options settings for File Types. Before going any further, create a Restore Point. Click on Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, System Restore, then select Create Restore Point, calling it Before Folder Changes. If you had done this before, you would be able to solve the problem by restoring that Restore Point. As it is, create a Restore Point now in case you make things worse.

With any Windows Explorer window open, select the Tools menu, Folder Options and click on the File Types tab, which contains a long list of registered file types. For each file type, you can click the Advanced button and see a list of actions. You can highlight any of these actions

and click the Set Default button. This is helpful only on rare occasions.

The problem, as you have found, is that the settings for File Folder does not include the Open action. In fact, when Windows XP is first installed the only action listed is Find, although some applications add additional actions. At some point you've highlighted the Find action and clicked the Set Default button. That causes every folder to open with a search window.

The reason for the lack of an Open action is that, in addition to File Folder, Microsoft has added a second file type for Folder. It's not clear why there are two different file types defined for one object, but the Open entry is under Folder, not File Folder. Unfortunately, if a default action is defined for the File Folder entry, it overrides the default action defined for the Folder entry.

You need to remove the default action, but the File Types window won't allow you to do that; it only lets you select a different default action. You have to use Registry Editor to remove the unwanted default action. Click Start, Run, type Regedit then click OK. Click on the '+' sign to expand the HKey_Clases_Root key. Scroll down the entries until you get to Directory. Click the '+' sign to expand this key then highlight Shell. In the right pane, you should see a value called (Default) with the type REG_SZ and the value 'find'. That value should be empty, so click on (Default) to open a new window and delete the word 'find', replacing it with the word 'open'. Click OK and close RegEdit. Folders should open normally again.

HARDWARE BIOS SETUP

ACCESSING COMPAQ BIOS SETTINGS

Q I have a Compaq Professional Workstation 5100, but cannot get into the BIOS to reset it. Holding Del, F1, F2 or F10 at startup does not work. Is there something special about the Compaq BIOS, and how do I get into it?

Bob Smith, bob@rsmith64.freemove.co.uk

A Yes, Compaq PCs are a little different. To enter the BIOS setup you have to wait until a black rectangular cursor is flashing in the top right-hand corner of the screen and press F10. Pressing F10 earlier or later in the boot process won't work.

Some Deskpro and Prosignia models are a little unusual as the BIOS setup program isn't stored in a flash ROM chip but in a hidden diagnostics partition on the hard disk. If the drive is reformatted or this partition is damaged, you won't see the black rectangle. In this case, you can rebuild the diagnostics partition or boot from the Compaq floppies. Either way, you'll need the download from <http://h18000.www1.hp.com/support/files/desktops/us/download/303.html>. Select your model, pick 'ROMPags and system software', download Computer Setup/VP and PC Diagnostics (or similar), build the floppies and boot from them.



HARDWARE DIAGNOSTICS

RANDOM PC STARTUP

Q I wonder if you can shed some light on a problem I have when switching on my computer. I turn the master plug on and press the PC's power button. The computer appears to start, but nothing comes up on the screen. Pressing the reset button doesn't have any effect. However, if I switch off at the master plug and try again, all is well. Scandisk doesn't even start up.

This is almost becoming the regular routine, but sometimes it behaves properly. Once running, there are no problems.

Alan Hancock, alan@thurn.freeserve.co.uk

A Here are some of the causes of this kind of behaviour we've seen recently:

- There was a screw loose and rolling around inside the case. Depending on where it had come to rest, the computer might boot or not.
- The connector from the power switch to the motherboard was pulled almost off its pins, resting on top of the pins and barely making contact.
- The power supply was failing. The computer worked fine with a replacement power supply.
- Some capacitors on the motherboard were blown and leaking. The purpose of these capacitors is to stabilise power supply to the motherboard components and RAM, so this can cause memory corruption and lockups. Blown capacitors are often caused by cheap power supplies.
- The processor fan works intermittently. When the fan does not start, the temperature protection circuit quickly shuts down the computer.
- The hard disk was failing and locking up while loading the operating system. In such cases, the computer will boot from a Windows CD but often has errors when you try to do a repair installation of Windows.
- Bad memory can cause similar problems. If you have more than one module, you could try removing each in turn.

- The graphics card was loose in its socket, so the computer boots but loses the display.
- Incorrect processor or overclocked motherboard settings. Entering the BIOS setup and choosing the default settings will fix this.

Start by opening up the case and checking that everything is seated properly. It is often a smart idea to remove and then replace memory modules and PCI cards to make sure their contacts have not oxidised. If the gold contacts look dull, clean them with a pencil eraser. Blow dust out of the fans and power supply with compressed air and make sure fans are working properly.

Carefully inspect the capacitors, which look like tiny tin cans on the motherboard. Blown capacitors will bulge at the top and often have visible brown leaks. Replacing capacitors, although possible, is not usually cost effective. It is better to replace the whole motherboard. Although bad batches of capacitors have been blamed for this problem, it tends to occur in cases with cheap power supply units. To avoid a recurrence, we recommend replacing your power supply at the same time.

If you have access to a POST diagnostic card – a PCI or ISA card that plugs into a free slot on your computer and displays diagnostic codes on an LCD display – this can tell you if the computer is completing the boot sequence or hanging at a particular stage. Basic cards cost between £30 and £60 from places such as www.cfide.co.uk and www.pctestpro.com.

Hard disks can be tested with diagnostic programs from the drive manufacturer's website. Always back up your data before testing a hard disk, as the diagnostics can put further strain on a drive that may be about to fail. Microsoft supplies a free memory diagnostic tool at <http://oca.microsoft.com/en/winddiag.asp>.

NOTEBOOK GRAPHICS

HOW DO I PLAY GAMES ON MY NOTEBOOK?

Q I bought an Evesham Quest Explorer S26 Plus notebook computer. Everything was fine until I installed my first game, Lord of the Rings: Return of the King. I was then informed that I needed a better graphics card.

I want to buy a decent graphics card that would be able to cope with future games, but wondered what would be compatible with my system.

Dan Clare, Sheffield

A Sadly, you're out of luck – you're stuck with the graphics system that came with your computer. The Quest Explorer S26 Plus is one of Evesham's budget range of notebook computers. We looked at it in *Labs, Shopper* July 2005, and found it to be excellent value. However, it is not designed for playing demanding games. None of the notebooks reviewed in our Budget Notebooks Labs test in July could run our Doom 3 game benchmark test.

There is no way to upgrade the built-in graphics processor, which in this case is a VIA S3G that shares the main system memory. If you want powerful 3D graphics, you will have to buy a far more expensive notebook computer. Even then, you're usually stuck with the graphics processor that comes with the system.

A few high-end notebooks, such as the more expensive Dell Inspiron models, have a separate plug-in graphics card, but unfortunately even these are specific to that particular computer. You are very limited in your replacement options.

STORAGE DVD FORMATS

DUAL-LAYER DVD CONFUSION

Q I'm a tad confused by the dual-layer/double-layer waffle surrounding recordable DVDs. On page 42 of *Shopper*, September 2005, you reviewed the Lite-On SOHW-1693 drive. You stated that it can create DVD-R DL discs, referred to as dual-layer, and DVD+R DL discs, referred to as double-layer.

I went to the Cannings website to read the specification and clarify the dual-layer and double-layer DVD situation. The specs included +R DL, but there was no reference to -R DL. I contacted Cannings to see if it could shed any light on the matter and was told that dual-layer and double-layer are the same.

Are you correct in stating that this DVD writer will handle both DVD-R DL and DVD+R DL formats? It seems that these formats are the same, and that Cannings is correct. But

if Cannings is incorrect and the formats are different, are you wrong in saying that this DVD writer can implement both formats? Assuming the formats are different, I would be obliged if you would advise me as to the differences.

Roy Carter, roycarter@tesco.net

A There are two competing DVD recordable standards groups: DVD+RW and DVD-RW. The exact differences between them are unimportant, since most DVD players can read either format, but occasionally you'll come across a player that can't handle one or the other.

Factory-made pressed DVDs are generally called dual-layer. This term has been adopted by the DVD-RW group. However, the DVD+RW group chose to refer to its two-layer discs as double-layer. Apparently, they were worried that users would get

confused by the similarity of the terms dual-layer and dual-format, which refers to drives that can handle both DVD-RW and +RW disks. So when you see DL, it might refer to dual- or double-layer.

Although they both implement the same concept, DVD-R DL and DVD+R DL formats are different and use different blank media. DVD+R DL drives were first to appear on the market. As we stated, the Lite-On drive was the first we have seen that can write dual-layer DVD-R disks. Purchasing blank DVD-R DL discs may be tricky until these drives become more common.

DVD-R DL blank discs are also referred to as DVD-R9, because they have an unformatted capacity of around 9GB, though only 8.5GB of this is usable. The Lite-On website says the SOHW-1693 is capable of writing both DVD+R9 and DVD-R9 discs. So our review was correct in stating that the drive can write to both formats. But Cannings was sensible in saying there's no technological difference between dual-layer and double-layer discs.



FACTFILE

DATA EXECUTION PREVENTION PROBLEMS

New security measures in Windows XP SP2 can cause problems. We show you how to fix them

Q I have an AJP Z71V Centrino notebook with the Data Execution Prevention setting enabled. I bought a copy of BlackICE PC Protection 3.6. Having downloaded and installed it, Windows XP developed a conflict. It ran for varying periods of no more than a few minutes before the firewall attempted to access the system files and caused a blue screen crash and memory dump.

The error message said there was an attempt to execute non-executable memory and included the code STOP: 0X000000FC. Technical support suggested a conflict with the computer's Execution Prevention function and told me to alter the Boot.ini to turn this off, and then install BlackICE.

I understand that the Data Execution Prevention function prevents Trojans from accessing system areas. Is it a good idea to turn this setting off?

John Ranson, john.ranson@legalservices.gov.uk

A Data Execution Prevention (DEP) is a new security measure introduced by Windows XP Service Pack (SP) 2. It is supposed to reduce the likelihood of buffer overrun exploits, used by the highly publicised Code Red and MS Blaster worms.

A buffer is an area of memory used when a program is waiting for data input. Programmers usually allocate more than enough memory for any legitimate input and just accept the input without checking that it will fit in the space allocated. Checking takes time, so it is easier to allocate ample memory.

BUFFER'S GUIDE

A buffer overrun exploit consists of sending the program a ridiculously large amount of input, such as thousands of bytes when it was just expecting one line, and seeing what happens. If the programmer did not check the amount of input, the excess will usually overwrite memory beyond that allocated for the buffer. If this block contained a stack, which stores the program address to return to after processing the input, the hacker could persuade the program to run his code.

When a program asks Windows to allocate a block of memory for its use, it can tell Windows how it intends to use it. Code read from a program (.exe) file will usually be loaded into a read-only area of memory, while data blocks will be marked as writable. Windows allows a program to indicate which blocks of memory contain executable program code, but until DEP was introduced it didn't matter as any block of memory could be executed. As a result, many existing Windows programs execute code without marking that area of memory as executable.

It is only newer processors, most made since late 2004, that have hardware support for DEP. AMD's 64-bit processors featured No Execute (NX) technology. The latest Intel Pentium and Celeron processors have a similar feature called Execute Disable (XD).

In addition to support for hardware DEP, SP2 introduced software DEP, which adds extra checks before executing certain blocks of essential system code. Software DEP works on all processors but only protects certain "essential Windows components and services". For more technical details of DEP, you can read Microsoft's descriptions at www.microsoft.com/technet/prodtechnol/winxppro/maintain/sp2mempr.mspx and also <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/875352>.

If you have Windows XP SP2, you can check the settings of DEP on your computer by right-clicking My Computer, choosing Properties and clicking the Advanced tab. Under Performance, click Settings and then the Data Execution Prevention tab. The default setting is to enable DEP "for essential Windows programs and services" only. Microsoft realised that many existing programs would break if DEP was enabled, because the developers of these programs hadn't bothered to set the execute bit when requesting memory allocations.

PROTECT AND SERVE

If you want the highest security, turn on DEP for all programs. If you choose this option, you are likely to have to add lists of programs that need to be excepted from DEP. For most of us this is likely to be more of a pain than it's

worth. If you don't add the list of programs, you'll have to wait until new versions of your favourite programs come out that are fully compatible with DEP. Users are advised to stick with the default setting to use DEP only on essential Windows programs and services.

Furthermore, if you turn on DEP for all programs, this may cause some device drivers to fail. Drivers can't be included in the exceptions list. So the only solution is to get an updated driver for the device.

In many cases, the programs will run with DEP enabled, but the installer program can have problems. A possible solution is to turn off DEP when installing new software. SP2 added a new parameter to the possible command lines in Boot.ini, which allows you to disable DEP when you boot into Windows. If you are familiar with editing Boot.ini, you can add a new line to the list of operating system choices, modify the text to something like 'Windows XP with DEP disabled' and add /noexecute=AlwaysOff to the end of the line.

If the line already has a /noexecute option (such as OptIn), modify the existing line. Set the time-out to three seconds, and make sure the default operating system choice is the line with DEP enabled. Then you can select the disable DEP option on boot just when installing software, or when testing a problem you suspect may be caused by DEP.

The problem with BlackICE appears to be in a low-level driver. The Stop code 0xFC error is generally produced by kernel mode drivers. The only way around this would be to disable DEP entirely, but that defeats the point of installing a security program. I'd give up using BlackICE until the developer fixes the problem.



PROGRAMMING BATCH FILES

RENAMING A GROUP OF FILES

Q Is there a utility that adds a prefix to filenames in batch mode? I want to merge some folders together. I have several different files in separate folders that have the same name assigned by the camera.

Mike Bedford, bedford_michael@hotmail.com

A The Windows XP command prompt Rename (REN) can handle wildcard file specifications, but it has limitations when you want to make the name longer. To rename a batch of files with more flexible names, you can use the FOR command. So if you have the files

DCIM0001.jpg, DCIM0002.jpg and DCIM0003.jpg, and you want to rename them to Sep2005-DCIM0001.jpg and so on, use the command:

```
for %a in (dcim?????.jpg) do ren %a
sep2005-%a
```



SECURITY SPYWARE

FLOATING POINT ERROR PREVENTS DOWNLOADS

Q Every time I try to get a free download, I get a message saying, "Invalid floating point operation". This message is generated by a file called 'Fdgo – Download Default.DFL FreshDownload' that stops any further progress. What is this invalid floating point, and how can I put it right?

David Sleet, david.sleet1@virgin.net

A Your error messages seem to be coming from a download helper application called FreshDownload (www.freshdevices.com). There are lots of these so-called helpers that claim to help you by, for example, speeding up downloads or resuming downloads after an error. Most software of this type is an excuse to blast you with adverts, but

this one claims to be free of adverts, although it has been classified by Microsoft as adware.

The website does require your email address before you can download or install it, so hopefully you gave them a free, throwaway address that you don't mind being filled with adverts.

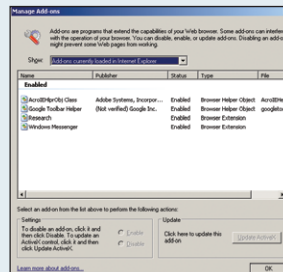
You should uninstall this software from Control Panel/Add/Remove Programs. Some versions have a buggy uninstaller; if you get error messages about missing files after uninstalling it, try installing the latest version of the software. If the buggy version you have is preventing you uninstalling it, and the floating point bug is preventing

you downloading the newer version, you have a Catch-22 situation.

The latest version of Internet Explorer that comes with Windows XP SP2 has a new

feature to control these add-on programs. Look in Control Panel, Internet Options, Programs, Manage Add-Ons. If your version of Internet Explorer does not have this option, you'll have to use the spyware removal tool HijackThis! (www.spywareinfo.com/~merijn) to remove the unwanted add-on.

Once you can download programs again, download Firefox from www.mozilla.org and Microsoft's AntiSpyware program.



View and disable Internet Explorer's add-ons in the Control Panel

HARDWARE PROCESSORS

MY PROCESSOR GETS VERY HOT

Q I bought an Athlon 2600+ PC from my brother, and it was running smoothly. I've got an Athlon 2200+ chip, and I decided to swap them over. Since putting the 2600+ into my main PC, which has a Gigabyte GA-7NNXP motherboard, I've noticed the temperature is around 60° to 70°C.

According to the AMD website, the maximum is 80°C. It baffles me that the chip was running at 39° in the PC I bought. As a test, I used the same components each time and just

swapped the motherboards. I was careful to make sure the heat sink had fresh compound each time, and I used the AMD heat sink/fan supplied with the processor in both cases.

The temperature was a lot lower on the MSI KT4AV motherboard that came with the PC I bought than with the GA-7NNXP I currently own. I have the latest F20 BIOS on the Gigabyte board, so I am puzzled and disappointed.

Paul Nicholls, paul-nicholls@hotmail.co.uk

A First, check that you have the latest BIOS release for your motherboard. Different releases may calibrate the temperature monitor in different ways, and they may also be setting the processor voltage differently.

Check the processor core voltage on the hardware monitor page of the BIOS setup program.

If this is set too high, it will cause the temperature to rise. You should also check the heat sink to make sure it is sitting properly. Also, too much thermal paste can reduce cooling; you only need a little.

If you use a software processor monitoring tool, such as Motherboard Monitor MBM5 from <http://mbm.livewiredev.com>, it might report the temperature differently. However, it would then be hard to decide which one was calibrated incorrectly. Does the processor seem to be any hotter by feel?

Our contacts at AMD's bench testing labs say that the temperature reported by MSI motherboards is usually accurate. Gigabyte motherboards often have inaccurate temperature readings, though, perhaps because of calibration issues that can sometimes be fixed in later releases of the BIOS, but also due to an inaccurate or badly positioned sensor on the board.

WINDOWS REINSTALLING

REINSTALLING WINDOWS ME

Q I was interested in the Windows instability problem in *Helpfile*, September 2005 ('Changing settings crashes second-hand PC'). My Windows Me computer often produces Kernel32 error messages, and I often get run-time error messages, particularly when going offline.

I run Norton and keep it updated. I am scared to run the CAB Folder's Setup.exe file, though, in case it trashes my folders, files and programs and Outlook Express data.

Also, do I include the inverted commas at each end of the Windows Me product key as shown in the Registry Data column?

Roland Jaggard, meccman@clara.co.uk

A There can be lots of causes of these errors and a major one is spyware. Norton AntiVirus does not catch spyware, and the free Microsoft AntiSpyware works only on Windows 2000 or XP, not on 98

or Me. For Windows Me, try Ad-Aware and Spybot Search & Destroy or Webroot's Spy Sweeper.

It is usually better to try and remove the spyware rather than reinstall Windows. When you run the Windows setup program, it defaults to a repair installation over the top of the existing Windows. This replaces system files but leaves all your applications still installed. Unfortunately, this means it also leaves spyware in place.

The alternative is to enter a new name for the Windows folder when you reinstall Windows. This gives you a completely clean installation. You will have to find device drivers, enter settings and passwords for your internet connection, download masses of updates and reinstall your applications, though. Don't delete the old Windows folder until you have copied everything you need from it.

Reinstalling Windows this way won't erase your data, but it could make some of it hard to find. The trouble with a clean installation of Windows is that some programs, particularly Outlook Express

and Internet Explorer, store their data and settings in a hidden folder in the Windows folder. If you use Outlook Express, this folder will contain all your email and your address book.

This only applies to Outlook Express and not to Outlook, which is the email program in Microsoft Office, or web-based email systems. The simplest way to fix this is to switch to a different email program. All Outlook Express users should try the free Thunderbird from www.mozilla.org. If you install Thunderbird before reinstalling Windows, it will import email and addresses from Outlook Express. If you do a clean install of Windows, you need to install Thunderbird again afterwards, like all other applications, but it should find the email easily.

Once you have a clean install of Windows, you can copy data from your old desktop and the contents of the Favorites and Cookies folders. These will all be found in folders under Windows, unless you enabled user profiles in your old Windows installation, in which case they can be found in folders under Windows\Profiles.

Finally, the inverted commas are not part of the product key. **CS**